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The goddess of Mercy, Kuan-Yin 觀音, who gives sons to her worshippers *sung tsz niang-niang* 送子娘娘, also called *san p'o niang-niang* 三婆娘娘 *or san hsiao* 三霄, is believed to be in the house for the first three days after the confinement; at the end of this time the father makes her an offering of wine, incense and paper, behind the bedroom door, where the goddess is supposed to lodge.

At the end of ten days the the father's mother and other relatives are invited to a feast, and presents of rice, eggs and chickens are brought to the family.

At the end of a month a feast is given, called *t'ang ping* (or *mi* or *yüeh*) *chiu* 湯餅 (or 米 or 月) 酒; all those who have given presents are invited. After this the mother may go to the kitchen or the well; before this many will not speak to her, and Buddhist devotees are especially fearful about doing so.

After fulfilling forty days, *man sz̆-shih t'ien* 滿四十天, the mother may visit her friends and show off the baby. In complimenting the parents it is safe to say that the baby is ugly 醜, or to use any other derogatory terms, so that the demons will not want it.

Having fulfilled 120 days the mother may go to the temple and give thanks to the idols.

At the end of the first year 滿週歲 *man chou sui*, the mother-in-law sends presents to the child. The old custom of this season was to lay before the child objects representing different occupations in life, and his training would afterwards be directed according to the object he grasped. This was called *chua nien* 抓年, grasping the year.

The above are some of the customs connected with ordinary cases. Women who are barren or son-less employ various methods to obtain such issue.

They beg a prayer-tally, 求籤 *ch'iu ch'ien* from a particular idol, take it home and keep it on the family altar. These tallies are notched pieces of bamboo, kept at the idol shrine for divination purposes.

They become vegetarians; this often means that they also distribute much rice to the poor. There are many kinds of vegetarian vows, such as *Kuan-yin chai* 觀音齋, (kept on the 9th, or by some on the 2nd, 6th and 9th, of each month);

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842 *chên-wu chai* 眞武齋, (a monthly fast, on the 1st days of the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th moons); *Tsao-wang chai* 竈王齋 (1st, 15th, 24th of each moon); *chiu huang chai* 九皇齋 and *pei-tou chai* 北斗齋, (9th moon, first 9 days, or whole moon); *ch'éng huang chai* 城皇齋, (1st and 15th of each moon); *yüeh-lo chai* 月落齋, (last day of each moon); *jih-lo chai* 日落齋, (daily till sunset); *ch'ang chai* 長齋, (for 3 years, or sometimes for life).

Some, in the hope of progeny, do various good deeds, such as making roads or building bridges.

842 778 Anti-abortion charms *an-t'ai fu* 安胎符, are sought by women who believe they have the *pao-t'ai sha* 包胎煞 or the *mai êrh sha* 埋兒煞; that is, that they are under the curse of abortion or still-birth. The sorcerer is called in, and the woman has to give him a pair of her trousers, a pint of rice, five kinds of coloured thread and an egg; this last is taken home by the sorcerer and worshipped. All must be carried out without the husband's knowledge.

Others *p'ei hsiung ching* 佩雄精 carry a charm made up of the purest *hsiung huang* 雄黃 (realgar).

Some make a pilgrimage to a sacred mountain 朝山 *ch'ao shan*; there they steal a baby-idol 童子 *t'ung-tzŭ*, or a *lo-han* 羅漢, and take it home. They also spend money on building temples or in printing books which extol the idols, such as the *pei-tou ching* 北斗經, the *Tsao-wang ching* 竈王經 or the *Kuan-yin ching* 觀音經.

Another way is to steal the shoes or underclothing of the wife of the city god, or of Kuan-Yin. These are taken home, put under the pillow and slept on. The virtue is supposed to lie in the fact that they are stolen.

An axe is hung on the underside of the bed in the hope of thus obtaining a son, *ch'uang hsia hsüan fu* 床下懸斧. Or the ox sinew from a crossbow is worn as a girdle; 牛筋弦帶 *niu-chin-hsien tai*.

787 842 Childless people also call in a fortune-teller to examine the horoscopes of the couple to see if they match; *k'ai nien kêng* 開年庚 or *p'ai ssŭ chu* 排四柱. If any of the fine elements are lacking, some person is invited to stand surety. For example, if the element gold should be missing, some one with